



The Case for Inclusive Programming and Policy Development

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The Orchid Montessori Center for Inclusive

Education is a team of teachers, therapeutic professionals and parents, passionate about providing a high-quality early learning experience for every child. Our extensive, diverse professional backgrounds have allowed us to design a unique approach that allows each individual child to thrive.

The Center is a collaboration between Orchid Montessori and Access Speech and Allied Therapies, a program of the nonprofit Autism Included. We have three small early childhood classrooms serving toddlers and preschoolers. Access Therapy has a satellite office in the building to provide push-in therapeutic services throughout the day for students who qualify.

A young child with curly hair is looking upwards with a curious expression. The child is wearing a grey Champion hoodie. The background is a soft, out-of-focus indoor setting with wooden elements.

Purpose

Neurodiversity

A concept recognizing that neurological differences are natural variations of the human brain.

Neurodivergent conditions can include autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, and Tourette syndrome.

Autism

A form of neurodivergence with unique communication, sensory, and social processing differences.

Inclusive Education

An approach that seeks to include children of all abilities in shared learning environments.

Key Legislation:

- *Rehabilitation Act (1973)*
- *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*

What Exactly is Inclusion?

Definition of Disability

According to the CDC, “A disability is any condition of the body or mind (impairment) that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities (activity limitation) and interact with the world around them (participation restrictions).”

Invisible Disabilities

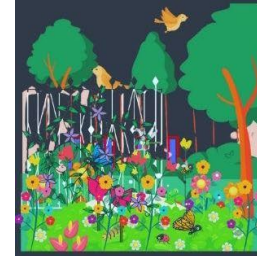
While awareness of visible disabilities has been common for centuries, there has been a great deal of societal change in recent decades in terms of the acknowledgement of “invisible disabilities,” which can be medical, psychological, or cognitive in nature.

Definition of Inclusion

According to the Inclusive Schools Network (ISN), “Inclusion is a philosophy of acceptance; it is much more than being in the same room... Effective inclusion creates a space where all students are able to participate.”

WHAT IS INCLUSION?

The idea that a classroom should reflect the community at large, accommodating and supporting learners with and without disabilities.



INCLUSION

Inclusive classrooms ensure that bodies and minds can access their education together. A good inclusion classroom is like a diverse and beautiful garden. Some plants need more fertilizer, a garden stake, or some shade to blossom, but all are able to thrive in a shared space.

EXCLUSION

While all students are entitled to public education, the barriers for some students with disabilities may still prevent them from accessing formal schooling. This is exclusion.



SEGREGATION

Segregation refers to the education of students with disabilities in a location completely separate from their non-labeled peers. This may be referred to as 'self-contained', 'sub-separate', or 'specialty school'.

INTEGRATION

Many programs educate students with disabilities in the same building, or even the same room, as their non-labeled peers. However, if they are not given the supports to access the same activities and participate fully with non-labeled peers, it is not inclusion. This may be referred to as 'partial inclusion'.



RESEARCH SUPPORTS INCLUSION FOR ALL!

Inclusion is best for students with and without identified disabilities.

Benefits include:

- stronger academic performance for students with disabilities
- better attendance
- stronger social connections for all students
- better self-esteem for all students
- and more!

Visit www.AutismIncluded.org for references & more info

Practical Benefits of Inclusive Programming for Child Care Programs

The practical benefits of designing a program and facilities that meet or exceed the standards outlined in ADA include:

- **Reduced legal risks**
 - ADA Compliance & Equal Access
 - Provider Rights and Responsibilities
- **Simplified licensing and permitting**
- **Positioning as a high-quality program**



As public awareness of neurodiversity increases, expectations for inclusion will continue to increase.



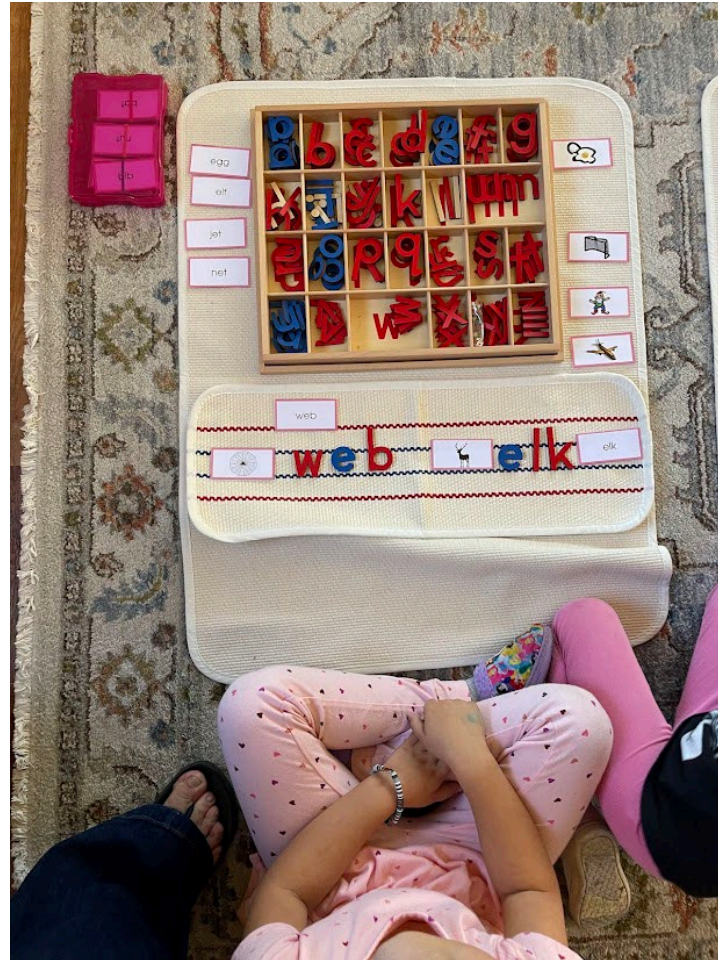
**Universal Design
for Learning**

Program Examples

Orchid Montessori Center for Inclusive Education Rhode Island

This program is a partnership between Orchid Montessori School and [Access Speech and Allied Therapies](#). Access has a satellite office on the school campus and can provide push-in support to students with speech, OT, and mental health support needs throughout the day.

In the Montessori classroom, each child progresses through the curriculum at their own pace, making this method a natural fit for inclusion classrooms.



Program Examples

The Discovery Preschools Pennsylvania

“Our educational methodology, Creative Curriculum, is research-based, play-based, and child-driven. The curriculum model notes developmental milestones year-over-year based on large, national norms. Children are instructed at their developmental level, not necessarily chronological age. All domains are equally weighted to ensure that we are teaching to the “whole child.” These include cognition, social-emotional development, arts and physical development.”.



Image Source: <https://thediscoverypreschools.com/gallery/>

Program Examples

[Ave del Paraíso Montessori School](#) Puerto Rico

Ave del Paraiso Montessori serves children from ages 1 - 6 years. Its mission is to center students with neurodiversity and functional diversity. Through its partnership with a local foundation and therapeutic practice ([Fundación Superhéroes](#)), it provides the space and support for each child to learn and grow, reaching their full potential at their own pace.



Image Source: <https://www.wildflowerschools.org/post/puerto-rico-partnerships-seed-new-progress>

Program Examples

Play Do Learn School Tennessee

“At Play, Do, Learn, we believe inclusion is “the active participation of every child in every activity.” This means that we educate and involve children with special needs in classrooms and everyday activities with their typically-developing peers. Children enrolled in our preschool have been diagnosed with a special need or developmental delay ranging from Down syndrome, autism, cerebral palsy, language delays, etc.”



Image Source: <https://www.srvs.org/playdolearn>

Program Examples

Green Lily Behavioral Health Minnesota

“Our staff prioritizes the needs of the children while maintaining a trauma informed and neurodiversity affirming environment. We work to create an inclusive classroom community where all kids feel safe to express their emotions with staff equipped to handle them and assist in co-regulation and restorative practices.”



Image Source:
<https://greenlilybehavioralhealth.com/intensive-childcare>

Program Examples

Elizabeth Academy Primary School Utah

“Our Early Intervention Services are provided to the children in our Infant, Toddler, and Early Childhood classrooms at both our Elizabeth Academy and Garfield School campuses. This service package includes intensive classroom-based Speech and Language Therapy support, as well as Physical Therapy (PT), Occupational Therapy (OT), and Music Therapy support and consultation services within the classroom.”



Image Source: <https://www.elizabethacademy.com/>

Program Examples

Cozy Care Nursery School and Childcare Ohio

This home-based child care program received a grant from the State of Ohio earning the new “Inclusive Child Care Program” designation. In order to qualify, the preschool’s staff had to participate in a professional development workshop to earn a Professional Early Childhood Inclusion Credential (PECIC).

Providers who have earned this credential appear in a searchable database for inclusive programs and qualify for additional training and grants.



Image Source: <https://cozycare.info/>

Resources and Further Information

- **Autism Included Website:**
www.autismincluded.org
- **Additional Reading and Professional Development**



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